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Government Announces Sustainable Agricultural Research Program

Report Categories:

Climate Change

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Report Highlights:

The Australian Government has launched a new A\$70 million research initiative to boost productivity and reduce carbon emissions across Australia's agricultural and forestry sectors – the Sustainable Agriculture Flagship Program. The goal of the program is to support a 50% growth in productivity and to reduce the carbon emissions intensity of agriculture by at least 50% by 2030.

General Information:

On February 8, 2010 the Australian Ministers for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, and Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Kim Carr, launched a new A\$70 million research initiative to boost productivity and reduce carbon emissions across the Australia's agricultural and forestry sectors – the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organization's (CSIRO) Sustainable Agriculture Flagship Program. The Flagship's goal is to support growth in productivity by 50% and to reduce the carbon emissions intensity of agriculture by at least 50% by 2030. The research will aim to strike a balance between environmental concerns and the need for ongoing prosperity in the agriculture and forestry industries. About 60% of the funds will come from an annual grant from government with the balance from private industry and other public agencies, such as universities.

"This important public sector research initiative will help drive innovation across the economy by addressing the critical productivity and carbon management challenges facing Australia's agriculture and forestry industries," Senator Carr said.

"It will bolster Australian scientific expertise and encourage the development of new technologies to help address global food security.

"We recognize that agriculture is under pressure" from climate change and other environmental constraints and from growing demand for food and for fuel for energy, he said.

"This will effectively position Australia as a world leader in this field."

Mr. Burke emphasized the collaborative approach the flagship teams will take working with government, rural R&D corporations and peak agribusiness bodies and companies to produce practical, science-based policy.

"The big challenge is that we need to achieve significant levels of carbon abatement as well as substantial increases in global production of food and fiber," Mr. Burke said.

"This research agenda will promote better understanding of soil carbon, biochar and methane emissions from livestock, improved farm management leading to greater productivity, and better management of our natural resources and ecosystems."

Agricultural productivity growth of a long-term average 2.8% a year has started to flatten out so a lot more research needs to be undertaken to meet a projected 70% increase in world food production by 2050, Mr. Burke said.

The Sustainable Agriculture Flagship brings the number of CSIRO Flagships to 10, and will complement a number of existing Flagships including the Food Futures Flagship and Climate Adaptation Flagship. An overview of this new Flagship Program are available at: <http://www.csiro.au/org/SAF-overview.html>.

Background

CSIRO National Research Flagships Program: Initiated by CSIRO in 2003, the National Research Flagships program is one of the largest scientific research endeavors ever undertaken in Australia. National Research Flagships are large-scale multidisciplinary research partnerships that harness world-class expertise to tackle national priorities. Further information on the CSIRO Flagship Program is available at: <http://www.csiro.au/org/AboutNationalResearchFlagships.html>.

The Flagship Collaboration Fund: Collaboration is a key principle of the Flagships initiative. Of the A\$480 million provided by the Australian Federal Government to the Flagships Program over the past seven years, A\$114.5 million has been allocated to enhance and reinforce the development of collaborative partnerships which reflect the National Research Priorities.

The Flagship Collaboration Fund includes a contestable collaborative research program (which offers funding for Flagship clusters and projects), visiting fellowships and postgraduate scholarships. Further details on the Flagship Collaboration Fund is available at: <http://www.csiro.au/org/Flagship-Collaboration-Fund-Overview.html>.

Each Flagship project is managed as a separate project with its own budget, financial and project milestones, and end date.

Sources: Various media reports; CSIRO website.

Recent Reports from FAS/Canberra

The reports listed below can all be downloaded from the FAS website at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/AttacheRep/default.asp>.

Report Number	Title of Report	Date
AS1004	Australian Container exports rise	02/02/10
AS1003	Grain & Feed Lock-Up – February 2010	02/01/10
AS1001	Commercial Cultivation of GM Canola Approved in 3rd Australian State	01/27/10
AS9042	Fresh Deciduous Fruit Annual 2009	12/24/09
AS9041	Australian Emissions Trading Scheme Excludes Agriculture	11/19/09
AS9039	Citrus Annual 2009	11/09/09
AS9038	Grain & Feed Lock-Up – November 2009	10/29/09
AS9037	Dairy and Products Annual 2009	10/20/09
AS9036	Ord River Irrigation Offers Huge Potential and Ongoing Challenges	10/13/09
AS9035	Sugar Semi-Annual 2009	09/30/09
AS9033	FAIRS Export Certificate Report	09/02/09
AS9032	Livestock and Products Annual	09/01/09
AS9031	Exporter Guide	08/31/09
AS9030	U.S. Distillers Grains Promoted at Australian Grains Conference	08/18/09
AS9029	Grain and Feed Quarterly Lock-up Report	07/31/09
AS9028	FAIRS Country Report	07/27/09
AS9027	Agricultural Biotechnology Report	06/14/09